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EL CENTRAL HISPANIC NEWS

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Southwest Holiday Fest Welcomes Visitors with Holiday Cheer Despite Freezing Temps

By Amy Johnson and Georgina García

Although the temperatures were in the teens on Saturday, December 13, the 11th annual Southwest Holiday Fest brought warmth to the neighbors and visitors alike. Southwest Holiday Fest began in 2013 to showcase and celebrate the rich culture, creative arts, and neighborly hospitality of Southwest Detroit's Hubbard-Richard and Mexicantown Neighborhoods. This year was no exception.

Plaza del Sol was packed with families decorating Christmas cookies, drinking Ponche Navideño, and visiting Pancho Claus. Matrix Theatre hosted standing room only shows of Flying Cardboard Theater's puppet show "There's Snow Business like Snow Business" and opened

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Photo by Josh Boland

El Southwest Holiday Fest recibe a los visitantes con alegría navideña

Por Amy Johnson and Georgina García

A pesar de que las temperaturas rondaban los -10 grados Celsius el sábado 13 de diciembre, el 11.º Southwest Holiday Fest brindó calidez tanto a los vecinos como a los visitantes. El Festival Navideño del Suroeste comenzó en el 2013 para mostrar y celebrar la rica cultura, las artes creativas y la hospitalidad de los barrios de Hubbard-Richard y Mexicantown en el suroeste de Detroit. Este año no fue la excepción.

La Plaza del Sol estaba repleta de familias decorando galletas navideñas, bebiendo ponche navideño y visitando a Pancho Claus. El Teatro Matrix presentó funciones con aforo completo del espectáculo de marionetas "There's Snow Business like Snow Business" del Flying Cardboard Theatre, y también abrió el escenario para que el público

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More than a Calling: Debra Ehrmann is This Year's Ohtli Recipient

By Estefania Arellano-Bermudez

In December of 2024, Debra Ehrmann retired from Centro Multicultural La Familia in Pontiac, Michigan. For the next couple of months, her phone rang off the hook from families who needed her skill set. By July of 2025, she had an office set up in Pontiac for her consulting services under the title "Señora Debra" – as she is known in the community. Today, she handles more than 50 advocacy and human service cases for families in need.

"My community called me," Ehrmann said. "I felt an obligation to come back and help."

Ehrmann was awarded the Ohtli Award from the Consulate of Mexico in Metro Detroit back in September during the grito celebration at LA SED Senior and Youth Center. The Ohtli Award is bestowed by the Mexican government upon an individual of Mexican descent living abroad who creates paths for others. Ohtli is Nahuatl (a language spoken by the Nahua people) for the word "path." Ehrmann has over 50 years of experience working with the end goal to help not just her community, but also those who don't understand how to navigate the system.

Cónsul Vazquez presents the Ohtli award to Debra Maria Rivera Ehrmann at the El Grito celebration earlier this fall

"She has touched so many lives," said Margarita Ovalle, community volunteer at Macomb Habitat for Humanity. "There have been some cases that were really hard and it has taken her sometimes months and months, but in the end, she has been able to find justice for them. It doesn't matter what the problem is, she vows to work tirelessly for them."

Ehrmann began advocating for others as so many Latino children do – by translating for her non-English-speaking father. She graduated from Wayne State University with a degree in Criminal Justice. When she became a mother, she volunteered at her child's school and witnessed the needs of the Latino families.

"I saw a lot of need in the community because our children were being labeled as special ed," Ehrmann said. "The fact that they don't speak the language or don't understand our customs here does not mean that this child needs special ed. So I advocated for children."

Throughout the years, she has accumulated knowledge that has allowed her to see the value in everything, and when she handles a case at her consultation firm, she knows how the pieces click. And if they don't click by themselves, she steps in – going so far as to accompanying a client during their court case. Her work involves translating for others, landlord-tenant issues, immigration issues, traffic violations, or showing up at a hospital to make sure an under-insured terminal patient receives medical care.

For the families she serves, Señora Debra is a call away when certain problems feel overwhelming or inaccessible due to culture shifts or language barriers. Her guidance in moments of crisis is invaluable, even to her coworkers.

Merlyn Parra, Student-Family Liaison at Walton Charter Academy, says Ehrmann's work serves as a community example. Parra has known Ehrmann for over 20 years.

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EL CENTRAL will take the last two weeks of December off and will return on January 8, 2026.

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Launch of official alumni association in early 2026 announced

WSU CLLAS Celebrates Multi-Generational Alumni Community and Long-lasting Impact at 2nd Annual Alumni Reunion

On Thursday, December 12, more than 80 alumni and friends of the historic Wayne State University program once known as Latino en Marcha and Chicano-Boricua Studies, now the Center for Latino/a and Latin American Studies, reunited for the second consecutive year to celebrate the season and look ahead to the new year.

Founded in 1971 by community members in Southwest Detroit working through local organizations LA SED, New Detroit Inc., and Wayne State, the program was designed to help young people with leadership potential access a college education. More than five decades later, the investment made by the program's founders continues to bring many returns with students and alumni making local and national impact and maintaining a deep commitment to its mission.

Held at the Mexicantown Community Development Corporation's Mercado on Bagley Street, the reunion featured festive decor, local fare, and a mix of Spanish and English holiday hits. During a brief formal program, founding alumnus Ben Esquivel of the 1971 Latino en Marcha class shared greetings and an invitation to fellow program participants in attendance. "At the time [of the program's founding], we understood the significance of what we were partaking in. We called ourselves 'la colectiva,' the collective, and saw ourselves as a family...we want to pass that energy and responsibility to the next generations of leaders to ensure this program is here for years to come."

Esquivel, who earned a bachelor's in business administration from Wayne State and led a successful career in global business, is one of countless program graduates that contributes time and resources to helping current students at the university. He announced the establishment of an official alumni association to launch in January 2026 with bylaws, goals, and elected roles. Alumni can learn more or participate in these efforts by emailing cllas@wayne.edu.

CLLAS Director Dr. Jorge L. Chinea reinforced Esquivel's message in his own remarks, encouraging alumni of all decades to "keep coming back to celebrate the program that gave so much to you in support, friendships and opportunities." Alumni also received an update about CLLAS activities from associate director Melissa Miranda-Morse, who shared details on the program's newest student cohort, the 55th in its history, which has been taking classes at WSU since late June. She invited guests to save the date of April 17th for La Academia del Pueblo Conference, when these undergraduate students will be presenting research projects developed after nearly one year of college coursework. "CLLAS has much to look forward to in 2026," she asserted.

The reunion was made possible through the generosity of sponsors MANA de Metro Detroit, SER Metro-Detroit, Mexicantown Community Development Corporation, all organizations with long legacies of community impact, and an anonymous donor who gave in honor of "Founding Fathers & Mothers of LEM/CBS/CLLAS."

Photo credit to Brayan Gutierrez

Recent CLLAS alumni with advisor and program coordinator Estenia Gomez Elisevich (third from left)

Founding alumni: students of the 1971 Latino en Marcha Leadership Program, predecessor to CLLAS, (l to r) Ben Esquivel, Maria Guadiana, Beatriz Esquivel-Ramos, Julian Caudillo, Belda Garza and Ozzie Rivera.

CLLAS alumni have gone on to found and lead many impactful organizations in the region, including MANA de Metro Detroit, which celebrated its 30th anniversary and raises thousands in scholarship funds for young women each year.

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Southwest Holiday Fest

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up the floor for audience members to tell stories of holiday snow catastrophes and watch the Matrix Playback Theatre Troupe reenact a car breaking down, a water line burst, and being introduced to the family for the first time in chaos.

Across the street, We the People opened their doors for a clothing swap where folks could trade old for new treasures. Music and merriment filled the Mexicantown CDC Mercado all day as attendees shopped local vendors, moved to the sounds of local Grammy-nominated pianist and arranger Alina Morr and Urban Tropical, and kids tried their best to break Piñatas. Corpus Arts studio opened its doors for ornament making. Hubbard Richard Neighborhood Association offered a chestnut-roasting tutorial and S'more kits.

Photo by Josh Boland

In addition to these neighborhood institutions, this year, The Brooke, Detroit City Football Club, and Greening of Detroit joined the Southwest Holiday Fest.

Despite the frigid temperatures, people were excited to line up for horse-and-carriage rides down Bagley Avenue. The night ended with dozens of people participating in a traditional Posada procession stopping at some of the can't-miss restaurants, bakeries and markets in Detroit's Hubbard Richard and Mexicantown neighborhoods: Mexicantown Restaurant, Los Galanes, El Pope Market, Taqueria El Rey, La Gloria Bakery, Xochimilco, Lupita's, Honey Bee Market, and Tamalera Nuevo Leon. Later in the evening, people warmed up at Blitzen's on Bagley, which gave out free candy canes, and Southwest Detroit's Neighborhood Bar, Donavan's.

Photo by Brayan Gutierrez

The event was organized by Matrix Theatre Company, Mexicantown CDC, and Plaza del Sol, with generous donations from The Brooke, The Ideal Group, Shaun and Wes Nethercott, and Lee Stille, along with contributions from Prince Valley, Greening of Detroit, Detroit Master Class, and photographer Josh Boland.

Photo by Brayan Gutierrez

Photo by Brayan Gutierrez

El Southwest Holiday Fest

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contara historias de desastres navideños relacionados con la nieve y viera al grupo de teatro Matrix Playback Theatre Troupe recrear la avería de un coche, la rotura de una tubería de agua y conocer por primera vez a una familia en medio del caos.

Al otro lado de la calle, We the People abrió sus puertas para un intercambio de ropa donde la gente podía cambiar prendas viejas por nuevos tesoros. Música y alegría llenaron el Mercado de Mexicantown CDC durante todo el día, mientras los asistentes compraban a vendedores locales, bailaban al ritmo de la pianista y arreglista local nominada al Grammy, Alina Morr, y Urban Tropical, y los niños se divertían al intentar romper las piñatas. El estudio Corpus Arts abrió sus puertas para la elaboración de adornos navideños. La Asociación de Vecinos de Hubbard Richard ofreció una bolsa de castañas para asarlas y kits para asar malvaviscos.

Además de estas instituciones en Hubbard-Richard y Mexicantown, este año se unieron al Southwest Holiday Fest, The Brooke, Detroit City Football Club y Greening of Detroit. A pesar de las bajas temperaturas, la gente hacía fila con entusiasmo para dar paseos en carruaje por la calle Bagley. La noche terminó con docenas de personas participando en una procesión tradicional de Posada, haciendo paradas en algunos de los restaurantes, panaderías y mercados imperdibles de Hubbard Richard y Mexicantown en Detroit: Mexicantown Restaurant, Los Galanes, El Pope Market, Taqueria El Rey, panadería La Gloria, Xochimilco, Lupita's, Honey Bee Market y Tamalera Nuevo Leon. Más tarde, la gente se fue a Blitzen's en Bagley, en donde regalaron bastones de caramelo, y en el bar del barrio del suroeste de Detroit, Donavan's.

Photo by Josh Boland

El evento fue organizado por Matrix Theatre Company, MexicantownCDC y Plaza del Sol, con donaciones generosas de The Brooke, The Ideal Group, Shaun y Wes Nethercott y Lee Stille, además de las contribuciones de Prince Valley, Greening of Detroit, Detroit Master Class y el fotógrafo Josh Boland.

Photo by Josh Boland

Photo by Josh Boland

Debra Ehrmann is Ohtli Recipient

Continued from page 1

"She gives everything from the heart," Parra said. "That's the big difference."

Whether she is navigating court paperwork, advocating for families, or accompanying expectant mothers to medical appointments, Ehrmann is more than an advocate. Her community work serves as reassurance to families unfamiliar with legal or institutional processes. Her consulting practice has become a lifeline for families who don't often experience dignity, fairness, and compassion in their dealings with the system.

Today, Ehrmann's work reflects decades of trust built in the Latino community. The families that seek her out are often navigating levels of fear, confusion, or isolation. For Señora Debra, the consultation services she provides are not a career phase or obligation – they are a community calling and she is always willing to answer the call.

"Every time I see her, she is always solving problems," said Parra. "Not everyone does this work."

Estefania Arellano-Bermudez is a Latina freelance writer living in metro Detroit. She is a regular contributor to EL CENTRAL Hispanic News and a member of Planet Detroit's Neighborhood Reporting Lab.

This article and photos were made possible thanks to a generous grant to EL CENTRAL Hispanic News by Press Forward, the national movement to strengthen communities by reinvigorating local news. Learn more at www.pressforward.news.

EL CENTRAL's 2025 Holiday Gift Guide

Written and compiled by Amber Ogden

Detroit Salsa Company

Just a short drive Downriver, Detroit Salsa Company shows that some of the best gifts come in jars. Mexican immigrant Finn Gomez started this business as a teen, and now the shop offers small-batch, preservative-free salsas that are always a hit at holiday parties. Their Lincoln Park storefront is a great place to pick up a "Custom Four Pack" gift set, where you can mix and match their Original, Verde, or the spicy "Ghost" salsa for anyone who loves heat. Be sure to grab a bag of their restaurant-style chips, too. They are sturdy for hearty dips and so tasty they might be gone before Noche Buena dinner even begins.

3464 Fort St, Lincoln Park, MI 48146
www.detroitsalsacompany.com

La Gloria Bakery

La Gloria is known for its amazing flavors. For a unique holiday potluck treat, try bringing a tray of their crispy, sugary churros instead of pie; no one can eat just one. They also make Rosca de Reyes (King's Cake) for Three Kings Day in January. Pre-ordering one of these festive, fruit-topped breads is a great way to keep the holiday spirit going after December 25th. Their breads are baked fresh every day, filling the street with the smell of cinnamon and yeast.

3345 Bagley St, Detroit, MI 48216
(313) 842-5722

Eldorado General Store

If you have a friend who loves Bohemian style, crystals, and unique vintage finds, Eldorado is the place to go. This woman-owned shop in Corktown is full of nostalgic treasures. If you have an eye for vintage clothing, you'll find racks of cozy sweaters, worn-in denim, and statement coats that make special gifts. The shop also has shelves of tarot decks, locally made jewelry, palo santo, and trinkets from around the world. It's the perfect place to find a gift with a story and a soul that no one else will have.

1700 Michigan Ave, Detroit, MI 48216
www.eldoradogeneralstore.com

LiTO

In the heart of the neighborhood, LiTO is different from other resale shops. You'll find vintage designer coats that outlast fast fashion and high-quality blouses that make thoughtful gifts. The boutique values quality and craftsmanship, so it's a great spot for a unique, sustainable gift for someone who has just about everything. This small, stylish shop makes gift shopping feel special.

4200 W Vernor Hwy, Detroit, MI 48209, behind the EL CENTRAL office
www.shoplito.co

Le Gallery

Le Gallery adds a fresh touch of contemporary culture to Downriver, giving local artists a space to shine right before the holidays. This season, the friendly, community-focused gallery is a great place to find thoughtful gifts. Along with changing vendors and pop-ups, you'll find cozy holiday sweatshirts, handmade tree ornaments, and artisanal soaps. It's a great place to pick up unique gifts and connect with the local creative scene. Skip the big stores and shop small at this relaxed, artist-run spot.

13736 Fort St, Southgate, MI, United States, 48195
(734) 225-6250

2025 Mujeres in Business – Michigan Edition

Isabel Flores, an anthologist from Mexico City, recently published the 2025 edition of Mujeres in Business – Michigan edition. The book includes inspiring stories written by 15 Latina entrepreneurs from around the state of Michigan including several from Southwest Detroit and the Detroit Metro area. Each author gives valuable insights into how they got into the business they are in and the obstacles they overcame to achieve their success. They also share some important life lessons of resilience we can all appreciate.

Available at these locations in Southwest Detroit and online.
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L' Arte Sano Café and Juice Bar, 4748 W. Vernor
Junction Party Store, 3260 Junction
Or online at
www.mujeresinbiz.com

2025 Detroit Writing Room Awards Honor 35 Local Creators, Raise Funds for Student Storytellers

By Amber Ogden. Photo courtesy of Detroit Writing Room

The Detroit Public Theatre was full of excitement during the 2025 Detroit Writing Room Awards (DWR) on Tuesday, December 9th. This event was more than just a ceremony. It proved that Detroit's stories, from everyday challenges to big dreams, are being shared and, most importantly, heard.

The night honored 35 writers and photographers, but its main focus was the event's mission. The gala raised money for Coaching Detroit Forward, the nonprofit part of The Detroit Writing Room. This organization is also changing local media and literature by helping Black and Brown students in Detroit get the support and opportunities they need to share their own stories.

Detroit Free Press columnist and DWR coach Neal Rubin hosted the ceremony, which many guests called a "magical night." Money raised from the awards and the new anthology, "Detroit Voices," goes straight to Coaching Detroit Forward. This program pays for free summer camps and workshops in journalism, photography, and creative writing for Detroit youth. For many Black and Brown students, these programs help them go from having a story to seeing their name in print.

One example is student Ryan Bell, who felt nervous before his big moment but went on to win second place in photography, in the 13-18 age group, for his photo, "Moment in Fashion."

"I was definitely surprised [after winning], considering I only just recently remembered what picture I submitted. I still had a great time tonight. The fact that I won is still amazing, and I will accept the win," Bell said.

Diverse voices are often missing in the media, but the DWR Awards help change this. By honoring both well-known local artists and high school students, the group shows young writers of color that their views matter and are an important part of Detroit's story. This was clear in the event's photos, taken by Natalia Gutierrez Contreras, who graduated from the Coaching Detroit Forward photography program in 2023.

The 2025 winners came from all parts of Metro Detroit's creative scene, with awards in areas from screenwriting to flash fiction.

In Poetry, "The Heidelberg Project" by Jimmie Smith Jr. won first place, celebrating one of the city's best-known art sites. Addie Ulrey took second with "October in Michigan," and suburbanBLKwriter placed third with "on gratitude: an ode to my mother."

In Flash Fiction, Ann Goethe won first place with "What Crows Eat," and Erin Dawkins took second with "Proof of Life." In Non-Fiction, Cherie Logan's "Belinda" led the category, and Nancy Nolan's "Mother's Day, 2018" won in Memoir.

The Essay category included powerful personal stories. Lydia Commissaris won first place for "Five Broken Elephants." Dr. Patrice S. Johnson took third with "I Did Not Ask for Permission: I Bought a House in Italy and Built a Revolution Out of JoyVisual storytelling was another highlight. In Photography, Quinn Banks won first place for "Movement," a photo that captures the city's energy. Leslie Cieplechowicz and Trish Coates completed the top three.

A strong turnout in the 13-18 Age group categories was one of the most inspiring moments of the night. These awards are a key part of DWR's mission to support young talent.

In Poetry, Ishana Patel won first place for "I Pray for Women," showing the talent of young writers in Detroit. Patel also took second in Flash Fiction. Eliza Stewart was another standout, winning first in the Children's Book Manuscript (13-18) for "When Magic Collides" and first in Flash Fiction (13-18) for "The Crimson Egg."

Other youth winners included Alaa Hizam, who won Screenwriting for "Handle With Care," and Jesmin Begum, who took first in Photography for "Joy" in the 13-18 age group.

Begum said she was drawn to the happiness in the photo she selected to be submitted. She doubted she would win but entered it anyway because of the joy she got from it. She was excited to learn that she placed 2nd

All finalists from the ceremony are now published in print. "Detroit Voices," released just before the event, features work from all 35 winning writers and photographers. The book is more than a keepsake; it shows the mentoring and community that DWR builds. Buying a copy does more than add a book to your shelf; it helps support the future of Detroit's storytellers.

Sponsors like Detroit Public Theatre, Mays Multimedia, and Meijer Rivertown Market made the evening possible. Their support shows that local businesses recognize that a strong arts scene is important to a strong city. When the night ended at the Detroit Public Theatre, one thing was clear: Detroit has a voice. It is diverse, a mix of young and seasoned, and with help from The Detroit Writing Room, it is getting stronger every year.

"People, when they think of Detroit, they don't think of joy. And I want them to think, 'Hey, this is a teen from Detroit taking a picture of joy.' Where we live, there is joy. It's not just all gloom and doom," Begum said.

For the full list of winners, including Children's Book Manuscripts and Blogs, please visit www.detroitwritingroom.com/shop/detroit-voices-2025 for your copy today.

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Amber Ogden is a freelance writer born and raised in Detroit. She has published work in Forbes, Chevy in the D, Model D, and Rachel Ray Every Day. She enjoys art, culture, and eating her way through the city in her free time.

This article was made possible thanks to a generous grant to EL CENTRAL Hispanic News by Press Forward, the national movement to strengthen communities by reinvigorating local news. Learn more at www.pressforward.news.

Detroit Writing Room Winners. Photo by Natalia Gutierrez Contreras

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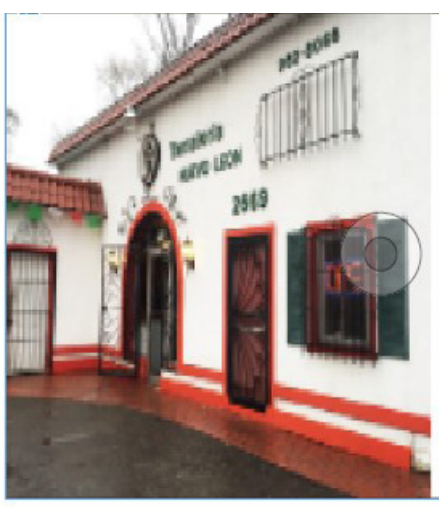

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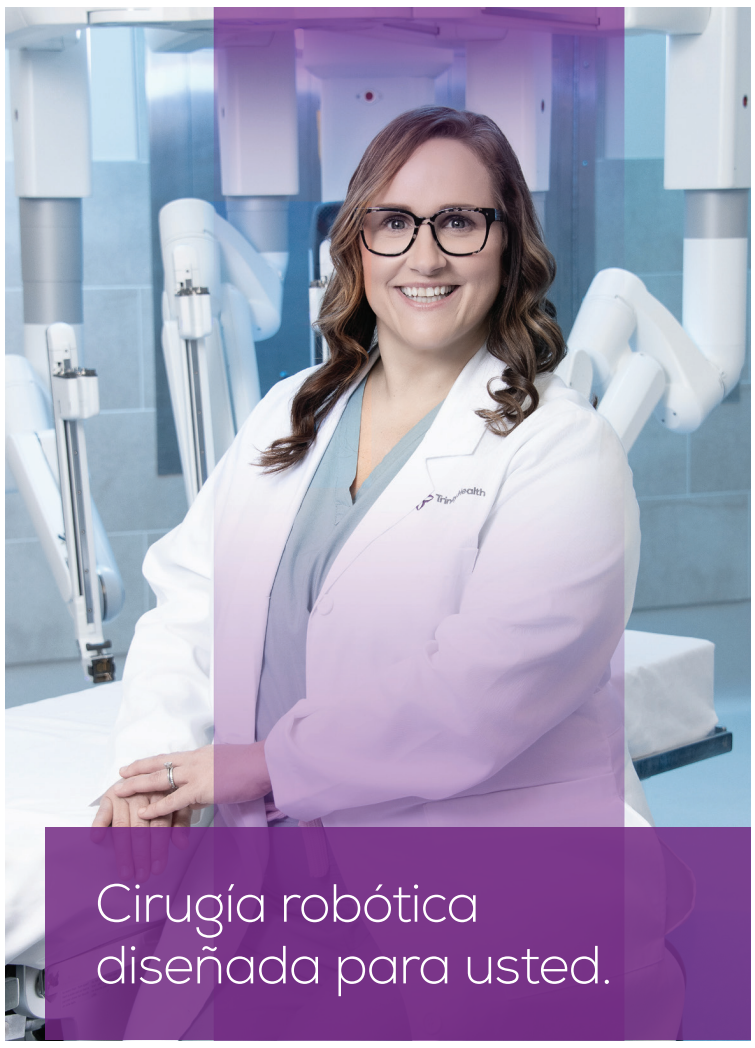

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Public Officials and Family Urge ICE to Release Ernesto Cuevas Enciso on Bond

Public officials, family members, and faith leaders are urging ICE to immediately release Ernesto Cuevas Enciso, a former DACA recipient, father of a young infant, and husband to a U.S. citizen wife on bond pending his immigration hearing this month. Ernesto was following the legal process and working on his permanent residency. He has legal work authorization and has been taking care of his family.

Ernesto was brought to the United States of America from Mexico at the young age of three, along with his younger sister. He was previously a Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipient. He is a construction worker and a married man with a loving U.S. citizen wife and one year old child. America is the only country he can truly call home. His only trouble with the law was more than a decade ago for nonviolent misdemeanor offenses (minor in possession and operating while impaired) - mistakes he made as a young man.

Ernesto has work authorization, has a Michigan driver's license, has a pending application for Legal Permanent Resident status, and has been following the immigration process just as our country encourages immigrants to do.

On December 6, 2025, Ernesto and another construction worker were near their workplace in Ypsilanti when an unmarked vehicle approached them and they were arrested.

"Like me, Ernesto was brought to the United States as a young child," said Miriam Stone, Ernesto's sister. "He married Andrea, U.S. born Citizen, in May 2023 and has been working with their attorney to adjust his status. He has a valid Michigan State Driver's License, a work-authorization card, and an accompanying Social Security Number. He works hard to support his wife and daughter. He was followed, stopped and detained while driving to work. On Thanksgiving, together in prayer we gave thanks that the adjustment of his legal status is pending but hopefully nearing. We do not take being in the U.S. for granted and pray that he is able to come back home."

"Ernesto is a hard working immigrant man who cares for his family and has been attempting to follow our nation's pathway to become a green card holder," said Sen. Chang (D-Detroit). "He deserves to be home with his wife and young child, not held in detention while awaiting his hearing. We urge ICE to release Ernesto on bond and to ensure that he is not deported to Mexico. Ripping apart hardworking families and removing a good father does nothing to solve actual problems in our community. Ernesto deserves to remain home in Detroit with his family and to continue contributing to our state."

"Our families are being torn apart," said Congresswoman Tlaib (D-Detroit). "Ernesto was doing what was right and following the legal process. Instead of allowing him to remain with his family and new baby, ICE is housing him 3.5 hours away at a for profit detention center that was a former federal prison that closed down because of abuses. Ernesto and many immigrant neighbors are being used as political pawns and financial gain and it must stop."

"In Detroit, we believe in keeping families together and ensuring every person—regardless of immigration status—is treated with dignity and afforded due process," said Detroit City Council Member Gabriela Santiago-Romero (District 6). "Detaining Ernesto runs afoul of this. It does not advance public safety and heightens fear among immigrant residents who are following the rules, thereby undermining trust in our institutions. Further, it harms a family that depends on him. As someone who grew up as an immigrant and has also called this country home since childhood, I know firsthand the fear, uncertainty, and disruption that actions like this create. What is happening to Ernesto is unjust and inhumane. ICE must release Ernesto immediately so he can return home to care for his wife and baby and fully participate in his hearing as he continues pursuing permanent residency in the only country he has ever known."

"The detention and threat of deportation of Mr. Cuevas is a travesty, especially when he is in the midst of the long process of obtaining legal permanent status," said Sen. Erika Geiss (D-Taylor). "Snatching him from his family and community when he is gainfully employed and contributing to his family, community and state is the exact opposite of what this country should stand for. Mr. Cuevas should be allowed to remain at home with his wife and infant and continue his path to citizenship."

"The residents I represent have made it clear that they do not want our beautifully diverse community to be a danger zone, and a place where ICE is allowed to terrorize people who live, work, learn, and play in Ypsilanti," said Desiraé Simmons, Ypsilanti Council Member of Ward 3. "I join the calls of his family for his safe return and to allow him to continue working through the legal process at home."

"Throughout the Torah or 5 Books of Moses (a shared text) we are reminded again and again we were once strangers in a land not our own and we have a responsibility to have compassion for those in similar situations today," said Rabbi Matt Zerwekh of Temple Emanu-El. "My people and my own family would have faced a different fate had it not been for this country being a welcoming land of immigrants. It is unconscionable that Ernesto would be treated this way and is antithetical to my faith and against upon what our country was founded."

"Ernesto left home Saturday morning for work, but he did not come home that night," said Rabbi Alana Alpert of Congregation T'chiyah. "His wife, Andrea, and daughter, Mia, now worry if and when he will be back home with them. Until he is released, Andrea has to carry on alone regardless of the fact that they have a pending Legal Permanent Residency case with USCIS. We pray that this family be reunited."

A group of elected officials sent a letter to ICE on December 7 urging Ernesto's release. The letter was signed by Senator Stephanie Chang, Congresswoman Rashida Tlaib, Detroit City Councilmember Gabriela Santiago-Romero, Senator Erika Geiss, Senator Mary Cavanagh, Senator Jeff Irwin, Representative Jimmie Wilson and Representative Veronica Paiz. The letter can be viewed at https://bit.ly/4oF4Ktb.

Ernesto Cuevas Enciso and family

Introducing LetMeDoIt, a Decision-making App for People with Disabilities

By Erick Diaz Veliz

EAST LANSING, MI— On December 3, the Reseda group, a service organization of MSU Federal Credit Union (MSUFCU), announced its partnership with the first decision-making app designed to help people with developmental and intellectual disabilities in their daily lives.

"We partnered with LetMeDoIt because it is an opportunity to promote financial inclusion in an underserved community," said Ben Maxim, Chief Technology Officer at MSUFCU, to El Central. "This app is not just for those with disabilities but also for their caregivers and family who support them."

Created in 2023 by Angad Sahgal and his father, Amit Sahgal, LetMeDoIt is the first app of its kind to provide accessibility and inclusion, leveraging a "supported decision-making platform", according to their web page.

For Jacqueline Cuevas, chair of Self Advocates of Michigan, dignity is what matters, and this app halts the tokenization that people with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD) face in societies that ignore them. "People with IDD are functioning members of society, contributing to families, workplaces, and communities,"Cuevas said. "We deserve systems that reflect trust, respect, and inclusion."

The app makes its users' lives easier. It is designed to provide tools for managing finances, healthcare, employment, and resource access, and transforms the most complicated choices into simple ones. Additionally, it promotes its users' autonomy while keeping caregivers and family informed about their situation.

For Sahgal, the creation of the app was personal. He is a senior student at Georgia State University under the Inclusive Digital Expression and Literacy (IDEAL) program. "As a person with a disability, entrepreneurship has allowed me to pursue my dreams and pave the way for the next generation of disabled entrepreneurs," Angad Sahgal said when the app was launched. "I know what it means to work with limitations and turn them into opportunities."

Since its launch and due to the importance of the initiative, the Atlanta-based project has been funded and supported by several funding programs, like Synergies Work and the Main Street Entrepreneurs Seed Fund from Georgia. The partnership with MSUFCU aims to provide financial education and banking products that users need most.

Following the Reseda group, they are committed to financial inclusion in what they call a "redefinition of what inclusion looks like in financial services." The credit union service organization has invested in other financial applications such as Goalsetter and Tamdem, promoting financial education and organization in the community.

"There is a trend in the financial services industry where banking is moving beyond just the actual banking products and transactions, and it is being supportive of embedded finance or lifestyle activities that banking facilitates," said Maxim.

Organizing self-finances may be tricky for many people most of the time. Cuevas affirms that for people with IDD, it is an overwhelming story. Factors such as background of trauma, lack of financial education, or cognitive overload merge with frequently complicated financial systems.

"When decisions are taken away 'for safety,' people lose opportunities to learn, grow, and build confidence," Cuevas says. "Over time, this can lead to financial dependence, vulnerability to exploitation, and a lack of trust in one's own decision-making."

According to the latest state data, there are approximately 2.3 million people with disabilities in Michigan. Following the latest "ALICE In Focus" report, 48% of this group live below the minimum income level needed to afford housing, childcare, healthcare, transportation, and a smartphone plan. 24,923 are identified as Hispanic.

Maxim is hopeful that job opportunities will come to people with disabilities, as an advantage that the application will bring. He mentions that using the app will expand users' abilities to have jobs they are not frequently offered. "By allowing them to live on their own and by promoting financial literacy with this group, they will be able to live independently.

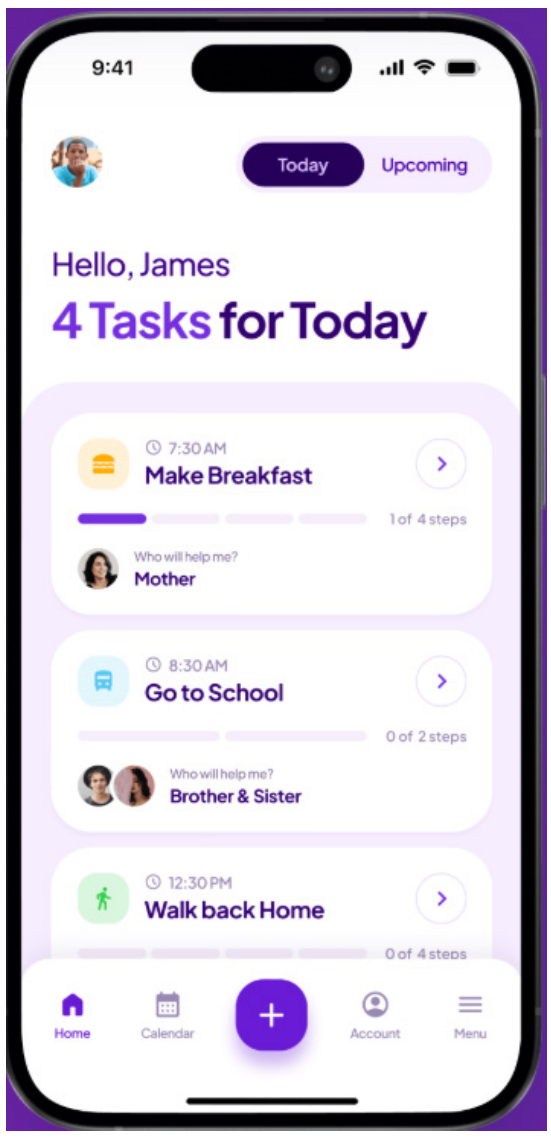
"Financial empowerment comes from being included in decisions, not removed from them," added Cueva. She highlights how important it is to have systems that support people with disabilities when they need a hand.

"As a disabled person, I know that my ability to process information changes when I am overstimulated or triggered," she finished. "That doesn't mean I shouldn't manage my finances — it means I need systems that support me during those moments."

******

Erick Diaz Veliz is a Peruvian reporter based in Lansing, Michigan. He has documents and reports on cultural, social, and political issues in Peru and Michigan as a freelancer. Erick was born in Lima, Peru, and has been living in Lansing since 2018.

This article was made possible thanks to a generous grant to EL CENTRAL Hispanic News by Press Forward, the national movement to strengthen communities by reinvigorating local news. Learn more at www.pressforward.news.



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Eric R. Sabree

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Warm Holiday Wishes from EL CENTRAL Hispanic News!

The holidays are a special time for counting blessings, reflecting on the past year and projecting new goals for the future.

Looking back on 2025, we are proud to note some significant achievements which enhance our ability to serve you, our readers and followers online.

First, this past Spring, we accomplished our long-time goal of launching our weekly e-newsletter with news and features for and about the community of Southwest Detroit and a growing network of readers online. If you haven't already subscribed to our free, information-packed newsletter, please take a moment to do so by scanning the QR code below.

We are very pleased to report that we have added some critically important voices to our growing newsroom this past year headlined by the addition of Michael Gutierrez, digital content manager. Michael is a very talented writer who grew up in the Detroit area. He had spent 10 plus years writing in the California film industry. We're happy to have connected with Michael as soon as he returned to Michigan. He will be launching more video content for EL CENTRAL as well as a podcast in 2026, further expanding the platforms in which we connect with our community, especially younger consumers of news and features.

We added the gifted talents of a new team member Stephanie Sanchez, who brings her special graphics touch to every print issue. Turns out, she's also a talented writer and photographer, too! And several new writers on the team continue to expand our focus on issues and happenings in our community in terms of geography, interests and serious concerns about residents' safety and security.

We are grateful for the many contributors who submit stories and opinions on still more events and issues in the community. Check out all the names of our team and guest contributors listed on the opposite page.

Bucking the trend for print media, each week our network of print and digital followers grows. We have expanded to reach Latinos living in Detroit's northern suburbs in Oakland and Macomb Counties. Our goal to reestablish connections in the communities of Pontiac, Flint, Saginaw and Lansing in the coming year.

And finally, we are proud of the recognition received by EL CENTRAL Hispanic News in the form of 12 awards bestowed on our reporting and features by the National Association of Hispanic Publications (NAHP) at its fall conference. The tally of awards maintains EL CENTRAL's status as the most awarded bilingual weekly publication in the state of Michigan.

Awards are nice, but more importantly, they are evidence of our commitment to provide the most local and original reporting and features for and about our readers in Southwest Detroit and beyond. Thank you for your support over the years. Please continue to demand the best from us.

EL CENTRAL won 12 awards at the National Association of Hispanic Publications' 2025 conference in November, including 3 Gold Awards for Outstanding Business Section, Best News Event Photo Essay and Outstanding Hispanic Success Story.

Happy Holidays,

Eva
Eva Garza Dewaelsche
Owner and Publisher

Robert
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Kronk Boxing back in Detroit

EL CENTRAL
HISPANIC NEWS
SPORTS
Sports Editor: Dan Graschuck/ EL CENTRAL

Story and photos by Dan Graschuck/ EL CENTRAL

The original Kronk gym closed in 2006, it continued to be housed in three different places, before it returned to Detroit this month, Kronk 's new home is at the Brewster Wheeler Recreation Center, located at 670 Wilkens St. off of I-75 near Eastern Market. Kronk boxing's great legacy was started by Hall of Fame Coach , Emanuel Steward, the hope is to bring back Kronk's great tradition in this famous home of where Joe Louis once trained.

Photos are from Kronk Boxing Gym opening

(l-R) Paul Bhatti, CEO of Kronk gym, and John Lepak,. , Kronk gym's chief operating officer. Kronk gym opened to public on December 10

Entrance to new Kronk gym at Brewster Wheeler Recreation Center

Boxers working out at the new Kronk gym

Entrance to new Kronk gym at Brewster Wheeler Recreation Center

Wolverines Coaching Change

Photos by Adam J. Dewey
University of Michigan Wolverines interim football coach, Biff Poggi (L, who acted as head coach during the season during Sherron Moore's suspension) will be leading the Wolverines to the for a rematch during the Cheez-It Citrus Bowl, against Texas Longhorns (who the Wolverines lost to in the second game of this season, 12 - 31), on Wednesday, December 31st, at 3:00 pm (ABC). Sherron Moore (R) has been let go by the University of Michgan Wolverines, and are currently looking to hiring another head coach.

A Look At The Best Of The World Cup Draw

EL CENTRAL HISPANIC NEWS SPORTS

David Levine
EL CENTRAL

After reviewing what the three host nations will face in the group phase of next summer's World Cup, it's time to review some other highlights from the draw. Expanding to 48 teams has spread the big nations thin across the twelve first round groups. The favorites had no chance of meeting in the first round. However, a slip up here or there, or maybe a bit of overconfidence, could produce a blockbuster or two in the round of 32.

A couple of major powers managed to draw at least one team in their groups who will give them a solid test. Very few of the top twelve seeds would have wanted to find Norway in their group. The Scandinavians rolled through qualifying, led by striker Erling Haaland. The Manchester City goal machine lit up Norway's opponents for 11 goals. The lucky top seed to draw Norway is France. Haaland v. Mbappe screamed the headlines. We had a preview last week when Manchester City travelled to Spain to meet Real Madrid in the UEFA Champions League. Haaland came out on top 2-1, scoring on a penalty kick. It wouldn't be impossible to imagine Norway taking points from France in the group phase either. The group also includes Senegal, who famously beat France to open the 2002 World Cup when the then defending World Cup holders crashed out in the group phase.

England will have a potentially tricky match against Croatia in group L, which also includes Ghana and Panama. Remembering how England struggled to a group exit in the heat and humidity of Brazil should give them pause. England, always favored, only won the World Cup in 1966 when they played every game at Wembley. They have been undone in past by overconfidence, travel, and hot summer weather. German coach Thomas Tuchel will have to give them a dose of reality before they embark on their American adventure. Slipping to second in the group would put them on a dangerous path.

England slipping to second in group L would put them theoretically in line to play Colombia, the favorite to be second in group K. However, the Colombians are no pushovers. They are fast, physical, and used to the kind of heat and humidity North America produces. It's not far fetched to imagine them topping their group ahead of Portugal. Portugal has had struggles in the past as a top seed. In 2002 and 2014 they struggled against the United States, losing in South Korea and only earning a draw in stoppage time in Brazil. Imagine Portugal slipping to second spot and England slipping to second place! That would put two of the most fancied teams head to head in the round of 32. Their supporters would be hard-pressed for tickets to that matchup as it would take place in Toronto's BMO Stadium, the smallest venue with only about 45,000 seats.

That second round stunner is only hypothetical at the moment. Another intriguing match will be in Group G. An aging Belgian team has the top seed, but could easily wilt in the heat. The highlight of that group may be Egypt against Iran. The political overtones will be heavy. Then, to add to the tension, FIFA put that game in Seattle's Lumen Field on the day Seattle will have their official Pride celebration. Not only will be tension between the two opponents, but both Muslim countries have already declared to FIFA how the Pride celebration offends their beliefs. Seattle had picked the date of the game long before the draw, so it looks like bad luck to have had that match there. However, given that Belgium, Egypt, and Iran will all believe they can take three points from New Zealand, the match between Iran and Egypt looks to be crucial for placement and a potential spot in the round of 32.

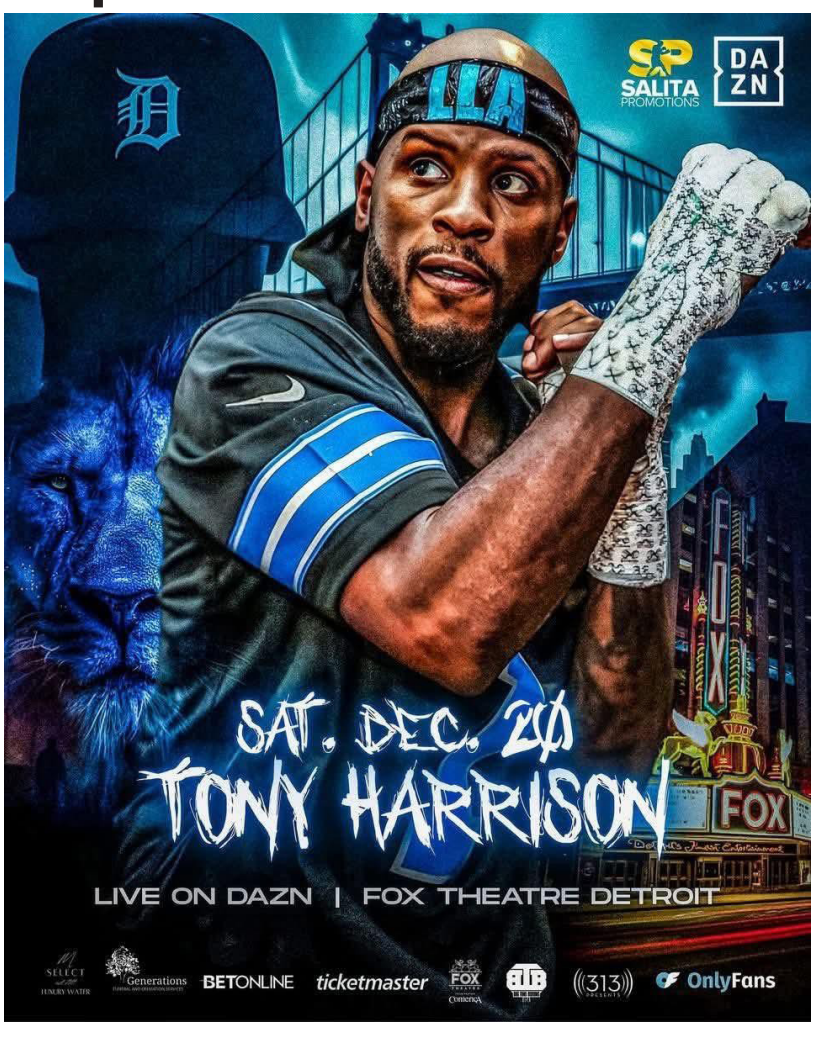
Scotland fans will have a sense of deja-vu after they were draw with Brazil and Morocco. They faced both countries in France in 1998 and haven't been to the World Cup since. The Brazil v. Morocco match pits the 2022 semifinalist against a team that is used to being among the favorites. Brazil is still Brazil and the yellow shirts demand immediate respect. But, this isn't Brazil 1970, or even 1994. For the first time, Brazil has a non-Brazilian manager. They persuaded former Real Madrid boss Carlo Ancelotti to try international management. He has coached many of Brazil's stars during his time at various European clubs, but this will be completely different. Brazil had a poor qualifying campaign, finishing well behind Argentina. They have a lot of egos and need a guiding hand.

Morocco is still riding the wave from being Africa's first semifinalist. They have much of the team intact and more experienced. Their showdown with Brazil on the first match day of their group will be must see television. They meet in Met Life Stadium, New Jersey, the place of the final. As for the Scots, they will have to hope they can score a ton of goals on Haiti and battle hard against the top two so they can have a chance to advance. The Scots will have thousands of fans in their famous Tartan Army, many based in the US and Canada joining their brethren from across the Atlantic.

Spain, the bookies' favorites, will have a tough game against Uruguay in a group that looks otherwise straightforward. Newcomers Cape Verde and Saudi Arabia could be a little tricky, but the Spanish team has the depth required to rotate players, saving their main stars for the elimination rounds.

Games aren't played on paper. Even the lowest seeds still have a chance, even a small one, to make one of the favorites suffer. The travel and weather will be important factors, even with FIFA instituting a mandatory 3 minute hydration break in each half of every game, whether the weather demands it or not. As the dust settles from the draw, the players and coaches have returned to their regular duties. The international managers will be watching injury reports, as well as hours of video in between trips to monitor their players across the globe. The players know they are less than six months from fulfilling their dreams and playing in a World Cup.

Super Bad at Fox Theater



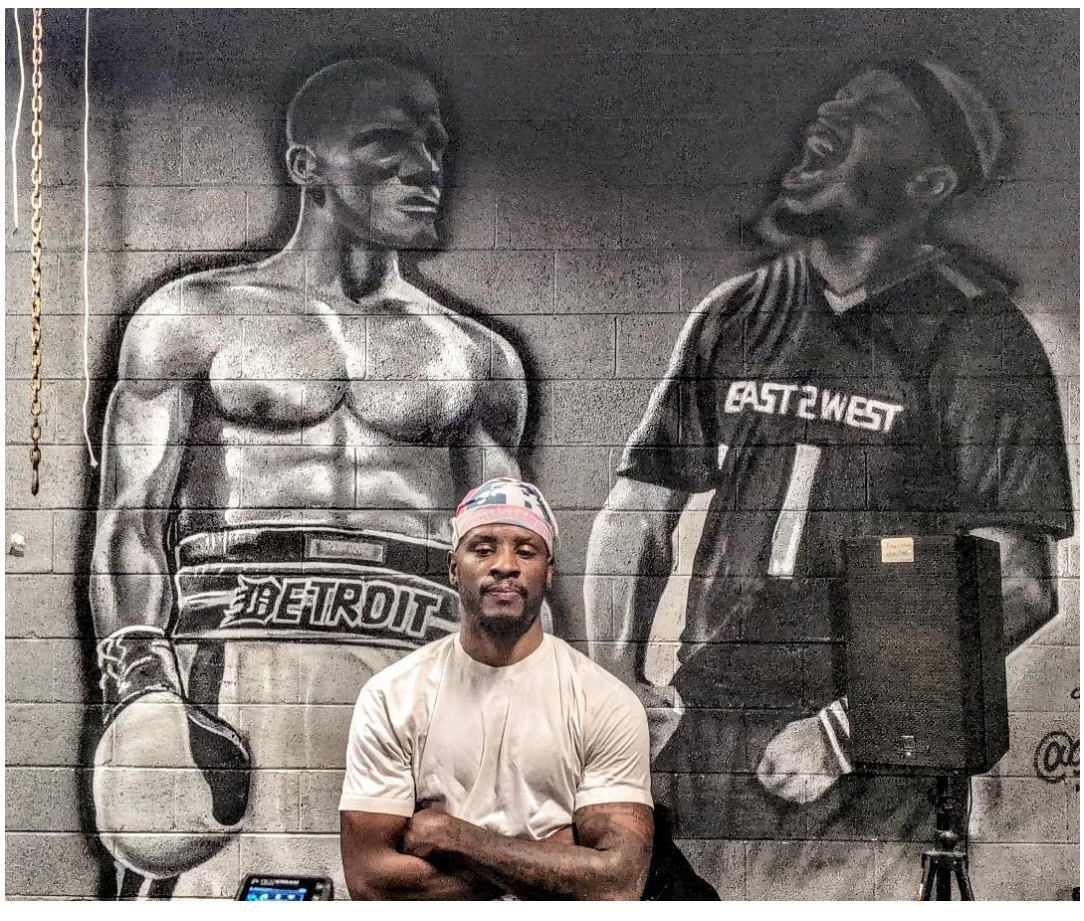


Photo by Dan Graschuck/ EL CENTRAL
Tony " Superbad" Harrison (30-4-1 , 21 ko's)
Detroit's last world's champion, continues his quest toward another world title in the middleweight division, on Saturday at the Fox theater.

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EDITORIAL OPINION

Guest Opinion:

How Christmas will steal the Trump

His malignant narcissism prevents him from understanding public anxiety about the cost of living

By Robert Reich

Trump gave what was billed as a "Christmas speech" in rural Pennsylvania this past week that began with his "wishing each and every one of you a very merry Christmas, happy New Year, all of that stuff" and boasting that now, under his presidency, "everybody's saying 'merry Christmas' again."

Then he claimed — contrary to the experience of nearly everyone in the crowd — that he had gotten them "lower prices" and "bigger paychecks." And asserted that anyone having difficulty making ends meet should just cut back on buying stuff. "You can give up certain products. You can give up pencils … Every child can get 37 pencils. They only need one or two," he said, adding, "You don't need 37 dolls for your daughter. Two or three is nice. You don't need 37 dolls."

It's rich — Trump preaching austerity while raking in billions from his crypto investments and bribes: a luxury jetliner from Qatar, gold bar from Apple, wealth from the Saudis, gold Rolex clock from Switzerland, and so much more.

"The only thing that is truly going up big, it's called the stock market and your 401(k)s," Trump continued, apparently unaware that 92 percent of the stock market is owned by the richest 10 percent of Americans while most Americans own no stock at all. (Just over a third have even a 401(k), 403(b), 503(b) or Thrift Savings Plan.)

He was supposed to talk about affordability, but Trump's malignant narcissistic brain seemed incapable of the minimal empathy needed to understand the public's angst over the cost of living. So he veered off affordability to attack Minnesota's Rep. Ilhan Omar, ridicule windmills, mock transgender people, and call Joe Biden a son of a bitch.

Small wonder that most voters have had it with Trump. Even the MAGA faithful are starting to have second thoughts.

In Miami this week, voters delivered the mayor's office to a Democrat for the first time in nearly 30 years and rebuffed the Republican candidate, whom Trump endorsed — by a whopping 59 percent to 41 percent. Miami's new mayor-elect, Eileen Higgins, said the city is "at the tip of the spear" of affordability concerns in America.

In Indiana this week, Republican senators rejected a redistricting plan that Trump had tried to bully them into accepting. He threatened to primary legislators who didn't go along and even whipped up supporters to pressure them — including so-called swatting of their homes (hoax reports to provoke a police response) and death threats.

It didn't work. Twenty-one senators from the Republican majority in the Indiana Senate and all 10 Senate Democrats voted it down.

Even congressional Republicans are starting to desert him as they see that the wannabe emperor has no clothes: His ability to hurt or help them in next year's midterms is rapidly diminishing.

They've rejected his demand to end the filibuster, rebuked his incipient health care plan, forced him to cave on the Epstein files, won't approve his bonkers $2,000 tariff checks for Americans, want more say over his boat strikes off the coasts of Central and South America, and are in open rebellion against his handpicked speaker of the House.

Trump won't steal Christmas, but it's looking increasingly likely that Christmas will steal Trump.

Opinions in this column are not necessarily those of the Publisher or Editor

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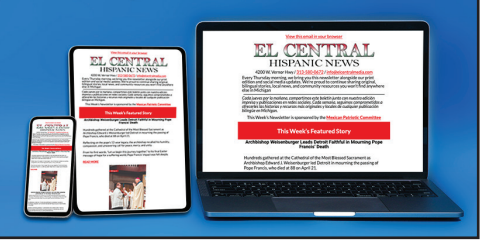

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Special World's Cultures

Chocholteco – Mexico

Chocholteco - Ngiba from Oaxaca, Mx

They call themselves Runixa Ngiigua, which means "those who speak the language," while the language is called Ngiigua. Their language belongs to the Oto-Mangue family and the grouping has three linguistic variants.

They live in the state of Oaxaca.

The area where they live is extremely rugged and is made up of part of the Teposcolula and Tamazulapa mountain ranges, which constitute the Mixtec Nudo, with heights ranging from 2,000 to 2,700 meters above sea level with small plains and poor and eroded soils. The climate of the region is classified as temperate subhumid, with annual average temperatures of 10 to 20 ° C. The rivers that cross the territory are of little flow. The population is supplied in the water sources and springs that abound in the region.

The flora and fauna are very poor. Within the first stand out the plants typical of arid lands such as mesquite, huizache, agaves, cacti, mulberry trees, junipers, palms, laurels and strawberry trees; As for the fauna, it includes species such as rabbit, hare, gopher, opossum and some deer; diverse varieties of vipers and scorpions abound.

The language Chocho, Chocholteco, Chuchon or Chochon, is an Ottoman language that is spoken in the Oaxacan towns of Santa María Nativitas, San Juan Bautista Coixtlahuaca, San Martín Toxpalán and San Miguel Tulancingo. There are 729 registered Chocholteco speakers.

Chocho is a language that, together with the

Popoloca language, belongs to the Chocho-Popoloca group. In Mexico there are 11 indigenous language families, the Chocho language belongs to the number family.

Originally they believed in a God of the Universe who was called Da'aní ndiú naa'rjuí, which means our Father God of the Universe or Heaven. Upon the arrival of the Dominican friars (1550), the conversion of the population to Catholicism began, so today the religion they profess is a mixture of Catholicism and pre-Hispanic religiosity.

Among the elements related to their ancient religion are to form conical piles of stones, which are placed by travelers on the roads that join the Chocholtecan peoples. The reason for this custom is the belief that if they go on a trip and do not place these stones, they will not return to their village. Another element is found in the idea that healers invoke the spirits of their ancient gods to perform cures.

Sigue cada semana en
EL CENTRAL Hispanic News
ESPECIAL CULTURAS DEL MUNDO,
by Mariana Ayón RV

Poetry Chocholteca

Little Star

A little star
small and pretty
fell near
my little house

María Guadalupe Andrés Mora

Red Flowers

I have red flowers
that I take care of
with all my heart,
if I don't take care of them
I have no reason.

Guillermina Reyes Vargas

Tongue Twister

My aunt is my uncle's sister
my uncle is my dad's brother
and my dad is my aunt's brother
and my uncles and my dad
are their dad's children,
the grandfather of my siblings and me.

José Felix Maldonado López

Rhyme

He who goes to Río Blanco
loses his bench,
he who is left without a bench
climbs onto the loft.

Daniel López López

Chochoteca's Legend: The Girl in the Wool Coat

A long time ago there was a girl in Ocotlán who could make it rain while she danced wearing her white wool coat.

The village enjoyed a time of abundance, until the elves El Chivato and la Mulata chased her away out of envy.

The girl in the wool coat went to San Juan Yucuita, and they say from then on people take flowers to the hill to thank the woman for her abundant harvests,

while Ocotlán was left with scarce water.

That is how we Chocholtecos tell it.

ESPECIAL CULTURAS DEL MUNDO
Chocholtecos – México

Chocholtecos - Ngiba de Oaxaca, MX

Se llaman a sí mismos Runixa Ngiigua, que significa "los que hablan el idioma", en tanto que la lengua se denomina Ngiigua. Su idioma pertenece a la familia oto-mangue y la agrupación cuenta con tres variantes lingüísticas.

Viven en el estado de Oaxaca.

La zona donde habitan es sumamente accidentada y está conformada por parte de las sierras de Teposcolula y Tamazulapa, las cuales constituyen el Nudo Mixteco, con alturas que van de 2,000 a 2,700 metros sobre el nivel del mar con pequeñas planicies y suelos pobres y erosionados. El clima de la región se clasifica como templado subhúmedo, con temperaturas medias anuales de 10 a 20°C. Los ríos que cruzan el territorio son de poco caudal. La población se surte en los ojos de agua y manantiales que abundan en la región.

La flora y la fauna son muy pobres. Dentro de la primera sobresalen las plantas propias de tierras áridas como mezquite, huizache, agaves, cactus, moreras, enebros, palmas, laureles y madroños; en cuanto a la fauna, comprende especies como conejo, liebre, tuza, tlacuache y algunos venados; abundan diversas variedades de víboras y alacranes.

El idioma chocho, chocholteco, chuchon o chochon, es una lengua otomangueana que se habla en las localidades oaxaqueñas de Santa María Nativitas, San Juan Bautista Coixtlahuaca, San Martín Toxpalán y San Miguel Tulancingo. Existen regustrados 729 hablantes de chocholteco.

El chocho es una lengua que junto al idioma popoloca

pertenece al grupo chocho-popoloca, y este grupo a su vez al gran tronco de lenguas otomangue. En México existen 11 familias de lengua indígena,el idioma chocho es perteneciente a la familia número.

Originalmente creían en un Dios del Universo al que se le denominaba Da'aní ndiú naa'rjuí, que quiere decir nuestro Padre Dios del Universo o del Cielo. A la llegada de los frailes dominicos (1550), se inició la conversión de la población al catolicismo, por lo que hoy la religión que profesan es una mezcla de catolicismo y de religiosidad prehispánica.

Entre los elementos relacionados con su antigua religión se encuentran formar montones cónicos de piedras, que son colocados por los viajeros en los caminos que unen a los pueblos chocholtecos. La razón de esta costumbre es la creencia en que, si salen de viaje y no colocan estas piedras, no regresarán a su pueblo. Otro elemento se encuentra en la idea de que los curanderos invocan los espíritus de sus antiguos dioses para realizar curaciones.

Tell them you saw it in Diles que lo viste en
EL CENTRAL
Hispanic News

Poesía Chocholteca

Estrellita
Una estrellita
chiquita y bonita
cayó cerquita
de mi casita

María Guadalupe Andrés Mora

Flores rojas
Tengo flores rojas
que las cuido
con todo mi corazón,
si no las cuido
no tengo ninguna razón.

Guillermina Reyes Vargas

Trabalenguas
Mi tía es hermana de mi tío
mi tío es hermano de mi papá
y mi papá es hermano de mi tía
y mis tíos y mi papá
son hijos de su papá,
el abuelo de mis hermnaos y mío.

José Felix Maldonado López

Rima

El que va a Río Blanco
pierde su banco,
el que se queda sin banco
se sube al tapanco.

Daniel López López

Leyenda Chocholteca: La niña de la lanilla

Hace mucho tiempo existió en Ocotlán una niña que podía hacer llover mientras bailaba y vestía su lanilla blanca.

El pueblo vivía una época de abundancia, hasta que los duendes: El Chivato y la Mulata la corrieron por envidia. Junto con la niña, exiliaron el agua de su comunidad.

La niña de la lanilla anduvo por los cerros, hasta que llegó a San Juan Yucuita, y dicen que desde ese momento la gente lleva flores al cerro para agradecerle a la niña de la lanilla sus abundantes cosechas.

Mientras que Ocotlán quedó con poca agua.

Así lo contamos los chocholtecos.

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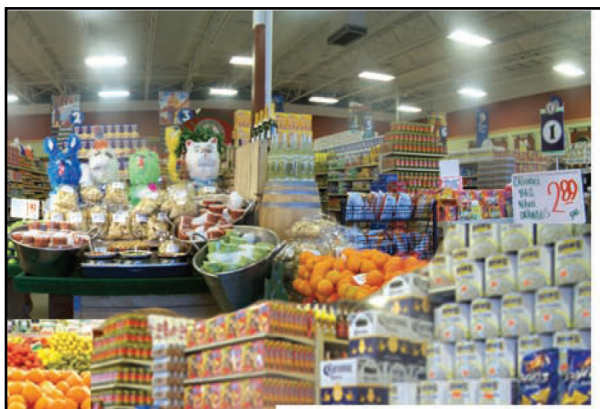

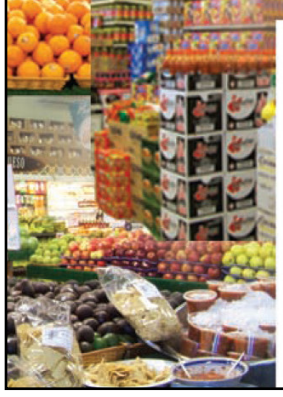

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